

**Fayetteville State University**

College of Arts and Sciences

Department of Psychology

Theories of Learning PSYC 320

Fall 2009

Locator Information

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Office Hours: MWF 8:00 - 11:00 AM or by appointment

Course: Theories of Learning PSYC 320; Three (3) credit hours

Semester: Fall 2009

Days: MWF

Time: 1:00 - 1:50 PM

Room:

Course Description

Human beings depend on learning for everyday activities, from walking to speaking, from finding their way around a city to dealing with other human beings; every behavior can be modulated by, or depends on, previous learning experiences. But, what good is learning if we can't remember what we learned?. The second part of this course describes, also, the mechanisms of memory. This course will provide students with a foundation in theories of learning. Students will gain a greater understanding of the principles that shape and control behavior. Theories of learning and memory from traditional animal research findings, human research, and more recent trends examining the neural basis of learning and memory will be considered in order to understand changes in behavior, including the acquisition and retention of knowledge. The student is encouraged to apply the main ideas discussed in class in his/her own habits of reading and studying. Prerequisites: PSYC 210.

FSU Policy on Electronic Mail: Fayetteville State University provides to each student, free of charge, an electronic mail account (username@uncfsu.edu) that is easily accessible via the Internet. The university has established FSU email as the primary mode of correspondence between university officials and enrolled students. Inquiries and requests from students pertaining to academic records, grades, bills, financial aid, and other matters of a confidential nature must be submitted via FSU email. Inquiries or requests from personal email accounts are not assured a response. The university maintains open-use computer laboratories throughout the campus that can be used to access electronic mail.

Rules and regulations governing the use of FSU email may be found at
<http://www.uncfsu.edu/PDFs/EmailPolicyFinal.pdf>

Disabled Student Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ACA) of 1990, if you have a disability or think you have a disability to please contact the Center for Personal Development in the Spaulding Building, Room 155 (1st Floor); 910-672-1203.

Required Textbook

Terry, S. (2008) *Learning and Memory: Basic Principles, Processes and Procedures* (4th ed.). Pearson, Allyn and Bacon. Boston, MA

Recommended Textbook

APA (2006) *Concise Rules Of APA Style (Concise Rules of the American Psychological Association (APA) Style)*. Washington, DC. APA.

Chastain, E. (2008) *How to write a Research Paper*. New York, NY. Sparknotes.

Student Learning Outcomes

The course main goal is to familiarize the student with historic and current theories of learning; understand the elements that define learning and how we can describe it from a behavioral, cognitive and physiological perspective. The other main object of the study is human memory and its different mechanisms. In addition, the class intends to be a review of methods and technologies that help us assess the value of learning in every human situation.

At the end of the course, a student should be able, among other things, to:

- Identify and analyze the major theories of learning.
- Describe the survival value that learning bestows on an organism.
- Explain the value of a behavioral and cognitive approach to learning.
- Demonstrate understanding of the underlying philosophies that inform the development of different theories of learning and its application.
- Apply knowledge from theoretical perspectives to the design of empirical observations.
- Compare different theoretical models of learning and assess their value in explaining different real world situations.
- Define the different elements of human memory and identify different conceptual approaches.
- Analyze the relationship between encoding, storage and retrieval in human memory
- Explain the relationship between spatial, motor skill and implicit learning in human memory.
- Synthesize the information acquired in the classroom and apply it in his/her own out-of-classroom behavior.

Course Requirements and evaluations Criteria¹

- Grading Scale The following grading scale will be used in this class:

Letter	Grade
A	91% -100%
B	81% - 90%
C	71% - 80%
D	61% - 70%
F	60% or less (failure)

- Attendance Requirements Students are required to attend at least an 80% of classes in order to receive points for it.
- Exams: There will be 3 (three) online exams distributed during the semester.
- Graded Assignments --
 - Assignments must be turned in on or before the due dates unless negotiated otherwise with the professor BEFORE THE DUE DATE. Assignments are due at the start of class.
 - Plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will result in an automatic "F" for the assignment (also see FSU regulations). These are very serious offenses for which students are dismissed at some colleges and universities.
 - Assignments should be typed or word processed (12-font, 1 inch margins). No hand-written assignments will be accepted except the various short-answer assignments (e.g., matching or short-answer exams).
 - When using a word processor, be certain that your system is compatible with systems available on campus to students and faculty. Do not forget to keep a hard copy and a backup disk of your work.
- Value of Each Evaluation Criteria -

Instance	Weight
Tests	60%
Assignments	35%

¹ Please note: If these evaluation criteria must be revised because of extraordinary circumstances, the instructor will distribute a written amendment to the syllabus.

Instance	Weight
Attendance	5%

- Policy on Missed or Late Assignments - Missed assignments will result in no points added to your total grade. One-half point (.5) per day will be subtracted from late assignments.
- Student Behavior Expectations: -The instructor will respect all students and will make every effort to maintain a classroom climate that promotes learning for all students. Students must accept their responsibility for maintaining a positive classroom environment by abiding by the following rules:
 - Students are expected to arrive to class on time, remain in class until dismissed by the instructor, and refrain from preparing to leave class until it is dismissed.
 - Student/teacher relationships, as well as relationships among peers, must be respectful at all times.
 - Students are not permitted to wear headphones or other paraphernalia that may be distracting to the classroom environment.

How does a good student's behavior look like?

- They attend classes regularly
- They are on time for class
- They read this syllabus
- They pay attention during lectures and ask questions
- They are self-motivated to read and study (even when they may not like what they are reading or studying)
- They show up during office hours to ask specific questions about the content (not simply to give excuses for work not done) or to discuss general topics with the instructor
- They complete all their assignments and tests
- They let the Instructor know before hand when they will be unable to complete an assignment and make arrangements to complete it at a later date.
- They make themselves know by simply rising above the "C" level expectations.
- They don't do these things simply to please the Instructor and, in that way, get an advantage, but because they value learning and their education, and specially, they value themselves.

- Students must refrain from any activity that will disrupt the class; this includes turning off cell phones, pagers, iPods and web surfing.
 - Students are not permitted to use profanity in the classroom.
 - Students will not pass notes or carry on private conversations while class is being conducted.
- **Consequences for Failing to Meet Behavioral Expectations:** The first time a student violates one of these rules, the instructor will warn him or her privately, either after class or before the next class. (Faculty members reserve the right to warn students publicly if needed.) The second time a student violates the guidelines, the instructor may deduct as many as twenty points from the student's next exam grade. If a student violates the guidelines three times, the instructor will report the student to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action according to the FSU Code of Student Conduct.

Academic Support Resources

This class will use the following resources: Blackboard.

Course Outline

The following is an outline of the content of this course. The dates on the far right are approximate and are subject to change due to unpredictable circumstances during the semester.

Week	Chapter	Month
Week 1	Introduction to Learning and Memory	August- September
Week 2	Habituation and other forms of learning	August- September
Week 3	Classical Conditioning	September
Week 4	Instrumental Conditioning: reward	September
Week 5	Instrumental Conditioning: punishment	October
Week 6	Verbal Learning	October
Week 7	Human memory: conceptual approaches	October
Week 8	Short-term retention	October
Week 9	Encoding	November

Week	Chapter	Month
Week 10	Storage and retrieval	November
Week 11	Spatial, motor skill and implicit learning	November
Week 12	Individual Differences in learning and memory	November

Teaching Strategies

In most classes there is an evaluation of performance through memory content. But learning produces more than simple accumulation of memories. We need to produce learning based on a physiological process called “plasticity”. In this class we will also use case studies and real life examples to apply the concepts discussed in class. We will use the traditional methods of lecturing as the main format to launch into new units of content and as a way to be sure everybody is in the same page. The main goal for using class time is to introduce themes and discuss them in a scholarly atmosphere, using groups as the main approach.

The other main part of the class is discussion, and of course, the participation of everybody is encouraged. I believe that science is a communal activity, that’s why I consider this form of learning the most important, since it will provide a place to ask and answer questions. Participation in class discussion and group activities will be considered as part of your grade. Non-traditional methods such as debates and small working groups will also be employed. In addition, in-class experiments and hands-on activities will be conducted, when possible. Videos and software demonstrations will supplement lectures to stimulate discussion.

Research participation as class assignments: Fayetteville State University is taking steps toward the development of research projects that will increase our chances to access external grants. Recently, one of these steps involved the start up of the BIOPAC Laboratory in the Department of Psychology, with the goal of expanding psychobiological research. No research agenda can be advanced without the participation of the whole collegiate community, faculty and students. This class will be invited to participate in a research project. One or two assignments in this class will consist in research participation. While all research is approved by the appropriate research committee, students will have access to alternative assignments if they prefer not to participate in research.

References

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